

Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources

NEWS

August 17, 2006

Special Edition

2006 Wisconsin Fall Hunting Forecast

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Letter from DNR Secretary Scott Hassett to fall hunters

Dear Wisconsin Hunter:

The fall seasons outlook presented in the pages that follow present a picture of opportunity. The ruffed grouse population appears to be on the upswing, pheasant stocking is up, and we've increased the number of available fall turkey permits due to a thriving turkey population – a species DNR reintroduced to Wisconsin a few short decades ago using your license dollars.

The whitetail population is estimated at 1.5 to 1.7 million, and opportunity abounds. Wisconsin ranks number one in the country for the highest single year deer harvest and also is the number one state for deer harvest over the past decade.

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Wisconsin DNR News & Outdoor Report is issued each Tuesday to media outlets, conservation and environmental organizations, and county, state and federal agencies. It is not available to the general public by subscription. This information is available on the Wisconsin DNR World Wide Web site listed above.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. This document is available in alternative format upon request.

This is an important upcoming deer season. We spent the better part of a year talking with hunters' groups about changes hunters would like to see in our hunting rules. We listened. At your suggestion there will be no October gun season in 2006. We've simplified deer tagging, and once again you can pre-qualify for future Earn-a-Buck requirements by harvesting an antlerless deer this year. We've also created a youth deer hunt that will help to keep our traditions alive.

Also at your suggestion we created a statewide 4-day December antlerless gun deer hunt that begins two weeks after the close of the regular season. Tags are cheap and plentiful and we hope this timing will provide a relaxed and enjoyable hunt. Deer hunters need to step up to the plate and put major hunting pressure on antlerless deer in December.

Hanging in the balance is the possible return of October gun hunting if we don't register at least two antlerless deer for every buck at season's end. People are watching to see if these changes provide an enjoyable hunt and a path to controlling deer herd size. Extra venison can be donated to the state's on-going food pantry program so nothing goes to waste.

Hunting continues to be a major factor in state and local economies. Resident hunters average almost nine million days in the field and contribute \$960million in retail sales. According to the Association of Wildlife Agencies, this translates into a \$1.8billion total economic impact. Those are some big numbers.

I plan to be in the field with you this fall and look forward as I always do to talking with you and hearing what you have to say. Take advantage of the remarkable hunting opportunities Wisconsin has to offer! Best wishes for a safe and successful fall hunting season.

Scott Hassett

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Scott Hassett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

2006 deer season forecast

MADISON – From the numbers, Wisconsin clearly is a land of opportunity for white-tailed deer hunters. In 2005, Wisconsin hunters harvested more than 467,000 deer, the sixth best season in Wisconsin hunting history. Wisconsin holds the record among states for a single year harvest at 618,000 in 2000, and is also the top deer harvest producing state over the past decade.

In 2006, Wisconsin's deer herd remains above population goals. Wildlife managers estimate it to be at 1.5 to 1.7 million animals going into the hunting season. "That projection is well above established population goals, but better than expected," said Keith Warnke, big game ecologist for the Department of Natural Resources.

"Wisconsin, hunters did a great job holding projected herd growth to 12 percent over last season given the 2005 season's reduced emphasis on herd control measures, no Earn-a-Buck units and an extremely mild northern winter," Warnke said. "But, one can see by the number of deer management units where we'll offer an unlimited number of inexpensive antlerless deer tags and the number of Earn-a-Buck units this season, that hunters need to step to the plate this fall and harvest antlerless deer to keep the deer population within management goals."

As a two year trial there will be no October Herd Control hunt, previously known as "Zone-T." The change was one of several recommendations by Wisconsin deer hunters to improve the state's deer hunt. Balancing the trial moratorium on October gun hunting is a statewide four-day antlerless only gun hunt December 7-10. Wildlife managers say hunters need to meet an overall harvest ratio of two antlerless deer for every buck to control herd size and avoid possible reinstatement of the October gun season.

"If we work together to have hunters harvest two antlerless deer for every antlered buck, we should be successful in keeping the herd in check," said Warnke.

Wisconsin deer hunting regulations are online at
<<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/index.htm>>.

A map of Wisconsin's 2006 deer management units is on the DNR Web site at
<<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/HUNT/DEER/zonet.htm>>.

Regular Units

Deer populations are at or near goal in these units (for a map showing regular, herd control, earn-a-buck and chronic wasting disease (CWD) go to the department's internet site at www.dnr.wi.gov). For the 2006 season, regular units will have a limited number of Unit Specific Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags. The number of additional antlerless tags available for these units should result in an antlerless harvest sufficient to manage the unit's deer population. In regular units harvesting a limited number of antlerless deer maintains a deer management unit (DMU) population near established post season goals.

Hunters can purchase unit specific Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags on a first-come, first-served basis until sold out at any license vendor beginning at noon on August 26. Tags can be purchased by phone (1-877-945-4236) or at the [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Online Licensing Center](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/HUNT/DEER/zonet.htm). Fees are \$12 each for resident and \$20 each for non-resident. Hunters must possess a 2006 Wisconsin deer hunting license to apply for the additional tags.

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Herd Control Units

Formerly known as Zone-T Units, Herd Control Units are designated when a deer population is well over goal and increased antlerless deer harvest is required to bring populations toward goal. This year, as part of the trial deer season structure, there will be unlimited Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags available for use in herd control units. Hunters will receive one free Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag for each license purchased and additional tags can be purchased for \$2 each at any license sales location or at the [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Online Licensing Center](#).

Earn-a-Buck Units

Twenty one of Wisconsin's 130 deer management units will have Earn-a-Buck requirements for the 2006 archery and firearm deer hunting seasons. Earn-a-Buck (EAB) requires hunters to first tag an antlerless deer before they can legally tag a buck.

Deer management units 46, 51A, 51B, 54B, 59B, 59C, 59M, 60M, 61, 62A, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 74A and 80B will have EAB regulations for 2006.

First used in 1996, EAB is prescribed if a DMU has been a Herd Control Unit for two consecutive years, and unlimited antlerless tags along with antlerless only hunts failed to reduce the population to near goal. EAB is a more restrictive season structure, but it is also a more effective method of population control. EAB units offer unlimited Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags, one free with each license purchased, and additional tags can be purchased at \$2 each.

NOTE: It is illegal to use a car-killed deer to obtain a buck authorization sticker or as authorization to register a buck.

2007 Earn-a-Buck Prequalification

A new EAB prequalification system was put in place during last year's deer hunting season and will be in effect again in 2006 and future seasons.

It works like this: Hunters registering an antlerless deer in any deer management unit this season that is designated EAB in 2007, will get a buck authorization sticker that is good on either an either-sex archery deer carcass tag or a gun buck deer carcass tag. In other words, a buck authorization sticker is not weapon specific. Hunters can harvest an antlerless deer with a bow and use the sticker with their archery license or their gun license.

Hunters looking ahead to the 2007 seasons can get an idea of which units might be in Earn-a-Buck by looking at the EAB "watch list" described below.

More than 70,000 hunters took advantage of this prequalification option last year and will hit the woods with a buck authorization sticker allowing them the option of taking a buck right away if the opportunity presents itself.

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Hunters who registered an antlerless deer last season in any unit that is Earn-a-Buck this season, and who think they have pre-qualified for a buck sticker, should have their DNR costumer number available and visit the [Earn-a-Buck Prequalification Status](#) page of the DNR Web site.

The EAB “watch list”

Based on population trends, deer management unit history and harvest history, deer managers have created an EAB “watch list.” These are deer management units that could potentially be designated as EAB in 2007. Hunters harvesting and registering an antlerless deer in these units in 2006 will pre-qualify for a Buck Authorization sticker if the unit is designated as EAB in 2007.

The department’s new deer registration database can track individual hunter harvest, including where and what the hunter registered. Because harvest information is taken directly off the deer registration stub, hunters are reminded to completely and legibly fill out the registration stub if they want to receive their “Buck Authorization” sticker in 2007. Buck stickers will be mailed to prequalifying hunters during the summer once 2007 EAB units are finalized.

The following units are on the “watch list” for 2007: 22A, 23, 24, 25, 27, 46, 47, 51A, 51B, 54B, 54C, 57, 57B, 59B, 59C, 59M, 60M, 61, 62A, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 74A, 77C, 77M, 80A, 80B and 81.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Deer management units, including state park units, located in the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) [Disease Eradication Zones \(DEZ\)](#) and the [Herd Reduction Zone \(HRZ\)](#) will again have special regulations for the 2006 season.

The following DMUs will have an unlimited either-sex season structure for the entire length of the 2006 season: 54B CWD, 70 CWD, 70A CWD, 70B CWD, 70C CWD, 70D CWD, 70E CWD, 70F CWD, 70G CWD, 71 CWD, 73B CWD, 73E CWD, 75A CWD, 75B CWD, 75C CWD, 75D CWD, 76 CWD, 76A CWD, 76M CWD, 77A CWD, 77B CWD and 77C CWD.

Hunters planning on hunting one of the CWD Zones should review the 2006 Chronic Wasting Disease Zone Deer Hunting Regulations pamphlet supplement, available in early September in hard copy and online, for specific details on hunting dates, rules, and zone boundaries.

Statewide December Antlerless Deer Hunt

Based on input from several hunters’ groups, a four-day December antlerless deer hunt will be held Dec. 7 – 10, 2006 in DMUs statewide, except State Park units, non-quota units and those portions of units west of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad that are posted closed to hunting.

There will be no four day October (Zone-T) antlerless-only gun deer hunt this year. But, if the December statewide antlerless hunt is not effective enough from a herd management perspective, the October hunt may be reinstated in the future.

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Youth Hunt

The fourth annual [Youth Gun Deer Hunt](#) will be Saturday Oct. 7 - 8, 2006. New for 2006 is the Youth Gun Deer Hunt will be two days instead of just one day, it will be earlier in October and youth participants will not be restricted to shooting antlerless deer. This special hunt was established to provide more youth deer hunting opportunity. The hunt will be held in all DMUs statewide, except State Park units, non-quota units and those portions of units west of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad which are posted closed to hunting.

Youth hunters ages 12 to 15 who have successfully completed a hunter education program and possess a gun deer hunting license may participate in this hunt. Qualified hunters may harvest one buck deer on their gun buck deer carcass tag and additional antlerless deer with the appropriate carcass tag.

All deer, bear and small game hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet blaze orange requirements on these two days. For more information on the youth hunt, check the 2006 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations pamphlet.

NOTE: Earn-a-Buck restrictions do apply in EAB units.

State Park Units

State Park units 23A, 52A, 57D, 61A, 69C, 72A, 73A, 77D, 77E and 80C allow deer hunting during one or more deer hunting seasons. Hunters wishing to hunt in these State Parks must purchase a \$3 State Park Access Permit [online](#) or at any DNR license location for the State Park of their choice. Permits are available beginning Saturday August 26 at noon on a first-come, first served basis until sold out. A State Park sticker or pass is required for all vehicles in a State Park. Special season dates, hours and area restrictions may apply within the parks; this information will be mailed to successful applicants.

Metro Deer Management Units

Metro units 59M, 60M and 64M are designated as EAB units, while 1M and 77M remain as Herd Control units in 2006. These metro units also have special deer hunting season dates. Hunters should review the 2006 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations pamphlet, available in hard copy and [online](#) in August, for season dates in these units and for other deer hunting regulations. Check local ordinances on firearm and bow use before hunting because many areas within the borders of the Metro Units do not allow firearm discharge and some may not allow the discharge of a bow or crossbow. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Sayer Larson (608) 261-7588 or visit the [Deer Hunting in Wisconsin](#) page of the DNR Web site.

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2006 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Season Dates

- **Archery:**
 - Sept. 16 – Nov. 16
 - Nov. 27 – Jan. 7, 2007

NOTE: Archery harvests in all units are restricted to antlerless only Dec. 7 – 10.

- **Gun:**
 - Regular Gun: Nov. 18 – 26
 - Muzzleloader: Nov. 27 – Dec. 6
 - Herd Control hunt: Dec. 7 – 10 (**statewide antlerless only**)
- **Youth Hunt:**
 - Oct. 7 – 8
- **Disabled Hunt:**
 - Oct. 7 – 15
- **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Units:**
 - **Disease Eradication Zone (DEZ):**
 - Archery: Sept. 16 – Jan. 7
 - Early Gun: Oct. 14 – 22
 - Late Gun: Nov. 18 – Dec. 10
 - **Herd Reduction Zone (HRZ):**
 - Archery: Sept. 16 – Jan. 7
 - Early Gun: Oct. 19 – 22
 - Late Gun: Nov. 18 – Dec. 10

NOTE: All CWD units are unlimited either-sex for the length of the season.

NOTE: Hunters are reminded that coyote hunting is closed in approximately the northern third of the state during the gun deer seasons from Nov. 18 through Dec. 10, 2006. See page 51 of the 2006 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations for the southern boundary of this special closed area.

*****CORRECTION: The coyote hunting season is open during the two-day youth hunt on Oct. 7 and 8. ** As with all hunting seasons, hunters are reminded to be absolutely sure of their target before they shoot. Mistakes in identification can be very costly.***

#

Regional Deer Season Forecasts

Northern Region

By Mike Zeckmeister, Regional Wildlife Supervisor (715) 623-4190

Of the 45 DMUs in the DNR Northern Region, 28 are subject to Herd Control regulations for the 2006 seasons due to high deer numbers. The reason we have so many units designated for herd control is that last year we had a mild winter and had fewer units designated for Herd Control than we initially recommended. These two factors resulted in growing deer populations. In Herd Control Units there will be unlimited \$2 permits for anyone interested in shooting antlerless deer. In the remaining units of the Northern Region, deer populations are at or slightly below goals. In many of these units the number of antlerless permits will be sold out early.

We had another mild winter in northern Wisconsin last year. The average winter severity index was 36 compared to a 30 year average of 57. Because of this, winter mortality was low and recruitment of fawns and yearling deer is expected to be above average in 2006. In most units, we need a heavy harvest of antlerless deer to help keep our populations in closer harmony with the carrying capacity of the land..

Northeast Region

By Tom Bahti, Regional Wildlife Supervisor (920) 492-5827

In 2006, hunters will find a gradient of deer numbers and hunting opportunities as they move north to south across the DNR Northeast Region.

DMUs in northern Oconto and Marinette counties (41, 44, 45, 49A, 49B and 50) have deer populations at or near management goals. These units will have the traditional hunting structure plus a December antlerless season, and the availability of antlerless deer tags will be limited depending on population status.

Winter severity in northeast Wisconsin was low last winter, and excellent fawn production and antler growth is expected. Antlerless quotas in these northern forest units are designed to allow the populations to increase and antlerless permits are limited accordingly, particularly in unit 49A. Populations in units 41, 44, 45, 49B and 50 are much closer to over winter goals and a lot of antlerless permits are available.

For the remaining southern two-thirds of the region, deer populations remain above population goals, and in some cases, far above management goals. Herd Control regulations in 2005 did little more than hold populations steady in most of these units, and EAB and Herd Control season structures will be used in the bulk of them. The following units in the Northeast Region will have EAB season structure in 2006: 51A, 51B, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A and 80B. Units 47, 64, 80A and 81 will have a Herd Control season structure meaning there will be an unlimited number of \$2 antlerless deer tags available for these units. DMUs 65A and 69 will have a Regular season structure.

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Working closely with various deer hunting interest groups, we will be experimenting with a statewide trial elimination of the October antlerless only seasons in Herd Control and EAB units. Clear performance standards are prescribed, and it is up to the hunters to show that they can take sufficient antlerless deer with unlimited antlerless tags and the Dec. 7-10 antlerless only hunt. Hunters will need to take two antlerless deer for every antlered buck in Herd Control and EAB units for this experiment to be successful and continue.

In Herd Control and EAB units, a free antlerless tag will be issued with each license, and there are unlimited additional antlerless permits available for a \$2 fee. Deer hunting opportunities will be plentiful, and it is important for hunters to take advantage of them. Seventeen of these DMUs are on the “watch list” for possible consideration as EAB units in 2007.

Hunters shot large numbers of 2-and-a-half-year-old bucks in the 2004 EAB units last fall. Some additional carryover should be seen again this year in those units, but it will not be nearly as evident as it was last fall.

Be safe, and have a great fall hunting deer in Northeast Wisconsin!

West Central Region

By Robert Michelson, Regional Wildlife Supervisor (715) 839-3736

For 2006, the DNR West Central Region again has high deer numbers in general, and the season framework will provide ample opportunity for hunters to take advantage of it. Only three units in the region will have a regular season framework (Units 56, 60A and 65A). All other units are substantially over management goals and will have Herd Control (22A, 27, 33, 53, 54A, 54C, 55, 57 57A, 57B, 57C, 58, 59A, 59D, 60B, 72 and 74B) or EAB seasons (46, 54B, 59B, 59C, 59M, 60M, 61, 62A and 74A).

Hunters in the region are urged to take advantage of the liberal seasons to harvest antlerless deer, qualify for next year’s EAB (in units that are EAB or are on the EAB “watch list”) and assist in reducing deer numbers where it is needed.

The presence of CWD in the state has made it clear that disease management is an important part of deer management. CWD sampling will be conducted throughout the region this fall as DNR continues its statewide surveillance of the disease. Every year sampling outside of the CWD Zones is being rotated around the state by region. We are hoping to again confirm that the disease is not present in the West Central Region.

Hunter cooperation will be needed to provide an adequate level of sampling (a drawing for \$500 gift cards will also be offered as an incentive by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation). Hunters may contact local DNR facilities to bring in samples during any season in addition to collections at designated sites on opening weekend of the nine day (Nov. 18-26) season. Some taxidermists and meat processors will also be collecting samples.

We are hoping that the high deer population and liberal seasons will provide for a good harvest and high hunter satisfaction in the region for 2006.

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South Central Region

By William Ishmael, Acting Regional Wildlife Supervisor (608) 935-1918

and Douglas Fendry, Area Wildlife Supervisor, (608) 275-3230

The department continues the effort to eradicate Chronic Wasting Disease in the South Central Region, and CWD hunting seasons will be found throughout most of the region. Only units 68B, 73D and the portion of unit 73B outside of the CWD zones will have the traditional archery season, October youth hunt, nine-day gun deer hunt, muzzle-loader season and the new four-day December hunt. These units are Herd Control Units and hunters can purchase unlimited numbers of \$2 Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags to be used in these units. The balance of the region will experience the expanded hunting opportunity associated with the fight against CWD.

The CWD DMUs will have a continuous Sept. 16-Jan. 7 archery season, and the gun deer season also differs from the rest of the state. In the CWD Herd Reduction Zone (HRZ), the gun season runs from Oct. 19-22, and Nov. 18- Dec. 10. In the CWD Disease Eradication Zone (DEZ), the gun deer season runs from Oct. 14-22 and Nov. 18-Dec. 10. Hunters may take deer of either sex, and there is no bag limit. While this is a very liberal season, hunters are reminded they must have a tag for every deer shot and all deer must be registered.

None of the DMUs in the South Central Region are EAB units this year. That doesn't mean deer populations are low. The stage is set for hunters to find great success this year throughout the region. Most of the region had EAB seasons in 2002 through 2004, which resulted in reduced buck harvest rates, and means there are more 2-and-a-half-year-old and older bucks in the population. While last year's either-sex seasons resulted in a higher buck harvest, there should still be plenty of older bucks around this fall.

We are encouraging hunters to harvest antlerless deer this year. While this year's season definitely goes much further in addressing hunter and landowner desires, it must also adequately address CWD management needs. In 2005, antlerless harvests dropped in the CWD management zones and our winter helicopter surveys showed mixed deer population responses; stable to increasing in the Western DEZ and decreasing in the Eastern DEZ and the Hollandale Area.

We will be watching this issue closely, but, we want to give hunters and landowners a chance with rules that are more to their liking. Many hunters believe they can accomplish the needed deer harvest with shorter gun seasons that concentrate hunting activity, particularly on the two opening weekends, resulting in more deer movement and high harvests. While many hunters take pride in harvesting a buck, in reality, most bucks are shot as a target of opportunity. Few hunters locate and hunt for a specific buck. During the rut (breeding season), it takes more skill to harvest a doe than a buck, and a young doe is better on the dinner table than an old buck.

Harvesting antlerless deer is the only way we will reduce deer populations and keep from resuming EAB seasons in the future. Reducing the deer population is not only necessary in the effort to contain and eventually beat CWD, but to reduce the high number of car-deer collisions and crop damage found in the region. Hunters, as true conservationists, can take pride in the fact that harvesting antlerless deer will reduce the number of human injuries caused by car-deer collisions, reduce the economic impacts of car-deer collisions and crop damage and help maintain a healthy deer herd in Wisconsin.

Southeast Region

By Jim McNelly, Regional Wildlife Supervisor (414) 263-8710

Deer populations are highly variable in this part of the state due to the variety of habitat conditions and hunting pressure. Hunting pressure is very high on all public lands and many private landowners restrict hunting access to friends and relatives. Those hunters wishing to hunt on lands in this region are encouraged to get out and meet landowners to get permission to hunt. Scout well before the season. Hunters should always check with local townships and village offices to see if there are any prohibitions on the firearm or archery equipment safety ordinances.

The anticipated deer harvest within the southeast region, which consists of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties, will likely be similar to 2005 due to a relatively mild winter. The Southeast Region includes three Herd Control Units (68B, 77C, and 77M) where deer numbers are well above established goals, and hunters are encourage to use the unlimited \$2 Herd Control antlerless tags to harvest does and fawns.

Deer densities in DMU 77M are generally lower than the surrounding areas. Hunting opportunities in this metro unit are limited as this unit contains lots of residential and urban development. Late season bow hunters hunting DMU 77M are reminded to wear blaze orange during that part of the late bow season that is open during the extended gun season. Deer harvests in DMU 69 will likely decrease in 2006 due to the large 2005 antlerless deer harvest there. This unit will be managed as a regular season in 2006. Antlerless deer permits in this area must be purchased at license outlets prior to harvesting antlerless deer.

Opportunities to harvest deer within the chronic wasting disease (CWD) zones may be somewhat reduced due to the high harvests of antlerless deer during the past two hunting seasons.

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Several State Park Units are found within the Southeast Region. A new unit, DMU 77E, at Kohler Andre State Park, will provide a limited harvest opportunity for muzzleloader and late season bow hunters. Access permits for these State Park units, including 69C, 77D and 77E, will cost \$3 and go on sale at noon on Aug. 26 on a first- come, first served basis. Vehicles in state parks are required to have a state park sticker. Please carefully check over the complete information on these units in the deer hunting pamphlet prior to applying for permits.

As during the 2005 deer season, all of DMU 77B and the southern portion of DMU 77C will once again fall within CWD management zones. Southern Walworth and extreme western Racine counties are within a Disease Eradication Zone and much of the remainder of 77B and 77C fall into a Herd Reduction Zone. These designations indicate that hunters can harvest multiple deer using an unlimited either-sex format, within the new 2006 CWD deer season frame work. Archery and gun hunters hunting this area should carefully examine the 2006 CWD deer hunting regulations to ensure they understand the rules for the portion of the season that they are hunting in CWD management zones. We are depending on hunters to help us eliminate chronic wasting disease in southern Walworth and western Racine counties and to help reduced deer populations in the remainder of the Herd Reduction Zone to stop the spread of this disease. Hunters should carefully review the new regulations for this area and note that deer taken from these zones must be registered within 24 hours of harvest at stations within the zone. Individuals hunting in Racine and Walworth counties should pay particular attention to zone boundaries in the 2006 CWD Deer Hunting Regulations pamphlet, as some of each county will be managed as part of the CWD Disease Eradication Zone and Herd Reduction Zone.

Hunters who hunt in the Disease Eradication Zone or Herd Reduction Zone will be required to have their adult deer tested for chronic wasting disease at the time it is registered. Department wildlife staff and DNR contractors will work with those hunters who wish to have their deer head mounted. CWD samples are needed from several counties within this region to better define the extent of the disease and to develop strategies to combat it. Sampling will be conducted free of charge and the test results will be provided to the hunter by the DNR.

This year CWD surveillance will also occur in Sheboygan, Washington, Ozaukee, Milwaukee, and the eastern portions of Racine and Kenosha counties that fall outside the CWD management zone. Hunter participation in deer head donations in these surveillance areas is voluntary and hunters are encouraged to participate. Listing of the head collection stations and other information is available on the [CWD in Wisconsin](#) page of the DNR Web site.

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Chronic Wasting Disease Update

By Alan Crossley, CWD Project Leader (608) 275-3242

Simply put – the goal of the DNR’s CWD management strategy has been and continues to be a healthy deer herd.

The discovery of CWD in southern Wisconsin represents a significant threat to the state’s white-tailed deer population and the culture of deer hunting in the state. Wisconsin has more than 700,000 deer hunters who have harvested an average of 460,000 deer annually during the past decade. Deer hunting provides our hunters more than 7 million days of recreation each year. And deer hunting generates more than \$500 million in retail sales and nearly \$1 billion in total impact to the state’s economy each year.

There is no evidence that CWD will “burn itself out” if left alone. Further, there is no evidence of genetic resistance to CWD in white-tailed deer, or mule deer in the western United States where the disease has also been found. Without intervention, CWD will spread throughout Wisconsin and the percentage of deer infected with CWD will substantially increase.

Wisconsin has chosen to actively intervene. The two basic disease management strategies we’ve implemented are reducing the infected deer herds and annually removing as many sick and susceptible deer as possible from the infected areas through expanded hunting seasons. These strategies require a long-term commitment to be successful. CWD management is our number one wildlife program priority because of the importance of deer to our state.

In the first three seasons of CWD management, gun seasons were greatly expanded and hunters were required to earn their buck by harvesting an antlerless deer first. These combined strategies were designed to control CWD by reducing the size of the deer herd as much as possible. Winter helicopter surveys indicated these seasons did reduce the infected deer herds. However, we heard from many hunters and landowners that these seasons did not meet their recreation desires.

Last year, we modified the CWD hunting rules by shortening the gun season length and limiting the earn-a-buck requirement only to the late October-early November hunting period. This year, we are further responding to concerns with a number of season changes:

- The early gun season in both DEZs will be shortened from 18 days to 9 days and moved up ahead of the rut to mid-October.
- The early gun season in the HRZ will remain 4 days.
- The late gun season in both the DEZs and the HRZ will end on Dec. 10 instead of Jan. 3 to address landowner concerns and,
- Hunters may take deer of either sex during the entire season.

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While this year's season definitely goes much further in addressing hunter and landowner desires, it must also adequately address CWD management needs. In 2005, antlerless harvests dropped in the CWD management zones and our winter helicopter surveys showed the efforts have had varied impacts on the deer population. Deer numbers remained stable or increased in the Western DEZ and decreased in the Eastern DEZ and the Hollandale Area.

We will be watching this development closely, but, we are working very hard to give hunters and landowners a chance to develop rules that provide the most hunting satisfaction while containing the disease and lowering populations. Many hunters believe they can accomplish the needed deer harvest with shorter gun seasons that concentrate hunting activity, particularly on the two opening weekends, resulting in more deer movement and high harvests.

This year, landowners in the DEZs and hunters they designate will again be able to hunt the DEZs without buying a regular deer hunting license by requesting a DEZ landowner's permit. These permits are available from any license vendor beginning mid-August. Hunters will again be able to donate DEZ and HRZ deer to a food pantry program.

A total of 652 free-ranging deer have tested positive for CWD since surveillance efforts began in 2002. DNR has tested more than 100,000 deer so far, and we have not detected the disease outside of southern Wisconsin indicating that we are meeting our very important interim goal of containing the disease. Last year we started a second sweep around the state by sampling more than 4,500 deer in the DNR Northeast Region. This fall we continue a second round of CWD testing in the DNR West Central Region and hope that many hunters come forward to get their deer tested to help us with this important effort.

We recognize that our goal of a healthy deer herd will not be successful without the cooperation of landowners and hunters. Without your help, we would be faced with an impossible challenge. We thank you for all of your contributions and for sticking with us.

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2006 Wisconsin black bear season forecast

By Brad Koele, assistant DNR deer and bear ecologist (608) 261-7589

MADISON – Wisconsin black bear hunters can expect another great season. State wildlife officials estimate the black bear population in Wisconsin going into the fall hunting season at approximately 13,000 animals. This is up from the estimated 11,000 bears prior to last hunting season.

Interest in bear hunting has risen steadily over the years. For the 2006 season more than 73,000 hunters applied for and received either a harvest permit or a preference point. This marks the highest number of applicants since the bear quota system was implemented in 1986. The number of available Class A harvest permits has remained relatively unchanged over the last several years. However, due to the increase in applicants, hunters now need four to nine preference points, depending on zone, before they receive a Class A permit. This year the department issued 4,370 Class A bear permits and set a harvest goal of 2,525 animals.

Last year, hunters harvested 2,645 bears with the highest harvests occurring in Bayfield, Price and Sawyer counties. Bear Management Zone (BMZ) A led the state with a harvest of 887 bears followed by zones A1 (727), B (543) and C (488).

New in 2006:

- The “no dog” portion of Zone A has been eliminated. Hunting with the aid of dogs is now allowed in all areas of Zone A.
- Also new this fall, successful hunters will be asked to voluntarily submit a rib sample from their bear. The University Wisconsin-Madison, in cooperation with the DNR and Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, will begin conducting a two year mark and recapture study used to estimate Wisconsin’s black bear population. The success of this study will be determined by the willingness of successful hunters to submit a rib sample from their bear.

For hunters hunting over bait or using other methods not including dogs, the 2006 bear hunting season begins Sept. 6. For hunters using dogs, the season opens Sept. 13.

For detailed information on bear hunting in Wisconsin, visit the DNR’s [Wisconsin Bear Hunting Web-site](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Brad Koele - (608) 261-7589

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Bear forecasts by DNR Region

Northern Region

Due to drought conditions in many parts of northern Wisconsin, it has been difficult to train dogs by pursuing bear during the first month of the training period. Mast or nut crops will likely be negatively impacted by these conditions, which may be a plus for hunters hunting with the aid of bait. The first week of the season is bait-only hunting (no dogs) in 2006.

We will continue the Learn-to-Bear-Hunt program this year in northern Wisconsin. One of the most frequent questions we receive about bear hunting is: "We see a lot of bear, so why do I have to wait eight years for a kill tag?" The first part of the answer is that last year we had more than 73,000 applicants wanting to bear hunt. In other words, there are a lot of people interested in bear hunting, and we cannot issue that many tags. The second part of the answer is that success rates are high, and we need to carefully monitor the harvest. If we over-harvest the bear population it takes much longer for it to recover, compared to other big game animals like deer.

Northeast Region

A healthy bear population has led to a third year of relatively aggressive harvest quotas for the Zone B portion of the Northeast Region. Despite an increased harvest for the last several seasons, bait station surveys and bear nuisance complaints are close to 2005 in the Zone B portion of the region, when nuisance levels were high. Near drought conditions in mid-summer may impact the availability of soft mast, which should help bring bears in to bait stations.

In Zone C, the bear population continues to thrive and expand. In 2005, several 600 pound bears were harvested there. Public land hunting opportunities are more limited in this portion of the region, so hunters with a Zone C tag should consider contacting private landowners early to establish a place to hunt. Although it is legal during the training season to train hounds in Zone C, they are not allowed in this zone during the harvest season. Successful bear hunters are urged to take advantage of an opportunity to assist in a bear population study by submitting a rib sample from their bear.

West Central Region

Except for the extreme northeast corner of Chippewa County, all 19 counties in the West Central Region lie within Bear Management Zone C. This means that even though bear dogs can be trained in this zone, bear hunters cannot use dogs during the hunting season. Zone C has the longest hunting season of all four zones, starting Sept. 6 and running through Oct. 10.

Last year's Zone C harvest was 488 bears. This number is down slightly from 2004 and well under the quota of 600. The 2006 Zone C quota will remain at 600. This translates into a permit level of 1,510, compared to 1,580 in 2005. Bear sightings and harvest data indicate that Zone C bears appear to be continuing their southward range expansion. While hound hunting for bears is not allowed in Zone C, the recent drought and failure of soft mast crops in many areas should favor bait hunting.

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Upland game 2006 fall forecast

Contact: Scott Hull (608) 267-7861 or Andrea Mezera (608) 261-8458

Ring-necked pheasant

Hunters heading out to Wisconsin's fields in search of ring-necked pheasants will find this year's pheasant hunting regulations included in the 2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations. In previous years, the pheasant regulations had been published separately.

Hunters visiting the DNR Web site will also find a new [2006 Pheasant Stocking Information Sheet](#) that identifies which public hunting grounds are slated for pheasant stocking. Game farm managers report that they will release approximately 52,000 pheasants into public hunting grounds this fall. That number is up sharply from the 34,000 that were stocked in 2005.

Please check the 2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations and be aware of the counties in which a pheasant stamp is required and which public hunting grounds have a 2 p.m. closure and/or allow hen pheasant hunting.

Results from the rural mail carrier pheasant survey indicate a 17 percent decrease in the number of pheasants observed by rural mail carriers per 100 miles driven when compared to 2005. The spring crowing count survey also indicates a 10 percent decrease in the statewide average of roosters per square mile. Brood survey information for this year will be available late this summer.

"Generally, it appears that the population has shown little change over the past three years," says Andrea Mezera, assistant upland wildlife ecologist, "Even though surveys indicate a slight decrease in the pheasant population hunters can expect a fairly good fall pheasant season."

Areas within the pheasant management counties that contain adequate winter cover (cattail and shrub-carr marshes, and thick switch grass fields) and have more than 15 percent of the landscape in idle grassland will have the highest pheasant densities say biologists. In Wisconsin research has shown that wetlands are one of the most important year-round cover types for pheasants.

"Over the long-term throughout the Midwest, pheasant populations have shown a decline," says Mezera. "Changes in pheasant populations have coincided with changing agriculture and land use patterns. Pheasants once relied on small grain and hay fields for nesting and brood rearing. These areas are now being replaced with larger row crops of corn and soybeans. It will be important for hunters to identify areas with high quality habitat and concentrate hunting efforts in that area."

A pheasant stamp is required to hunt pheasants in pheasant management zones.

From Oct. 14-15, the daily bag limit is one cock and possession limit is two. For the remainder of the season the daily bag limit is two cocks and the possession limit is four. Some public hunting grounds have both hen and cock pheasant hunting (requires free permits and tags) and /or 2 p.m. closure times. See the *2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations* at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf> for details.

Season open: Oct. 14 (noon) – Dec. 31.

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Wild turkey

Wild turkey hunting opportunity continues to improve as this reintroduced species continues its spectacular success. In only a few short decades the wild turkey has, with help from wildlife managers, hunting groups and hunter's license fees, expanded into all areas of Wisconsin.

This fall, 90,600 wild turkey permits will be available to hunters. This is a slight increase in permits compared to last fall when 85,400 permits were given out. Poult, or turkey-young-of-the-year counts will be completed in August and should provide additional information on brood survival.

The Wisconsin turkey population now extends well into the northern part of the state. Expansion is occurring in part due to statewide mild winters, available habitat and expanded habitat development and improvement.

A reminder: most turkey hunting occurs on private land so it is important to keep landowner relationships a high priority. Landowners in Wisconsin are usually willing to allow hunters to use their land as long as they ask politely for permission to do so.

During the fall turkeys spend more than 90 percent of daylight hours in hardwood habitats. Both brood flocks and adult male flocks make extensive use of areas dominated by oak and hickory. Turkey hunters should monitor the acorn crop in the area they hunt, as the success or failure of acorns will determine where turkeys will be feeding. In years of poor acorn production, turkeys spend proportionately more time in cornfields.

The fall 2006 season will take place Oct. 1 through Nov. 9. Bag limit is one turkey of any age or sex per hunting approval notice.

Complete fall turkey hunting season rules and regulations can be found in the *2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations* at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf>.

Season open: Oct. 1 – Nov. 9.

Ruffed grouse

The 2006 ruffed grouse spring drumming survey showed a 27 percent increase statewide in the number of drumming grouse heard during roadside surveys compared to last spring. The statewide average was 0.76 drums per stop in 2006 vs. 0.60 in 2005. Both the northern and southwest regions of the state saw an increase in drumming activity. Biologists say we should now be on the upward side of the 10-year population cycle and expect numbers to continue climbing over the next couple of years.

These survey results are in line with the 10-year ruffed grouse cycle that peaked back in 1999. Compared to peak years, reduced grouse in the bag can be expected, but these are great years to scout new hunting areas.

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“Hunters will not find uniformly high numbers of grouse across the landscape, says Scott Hull, DNR upland game ecologist. “They will need to seek good habitat for ruffed grouse hunting this year and may have to move around to find the pockets where good numbers of birds can be found. Ruffed grouse use a variety of habitat types, but young, early successional forest types are most important when trying to find a good grouse hunting location.”

The bag and possession limits are five and 10, respectively, in the northern and western zones and two and four in the eastern zone.

Complete grouse season rules and regulations can be found in the *2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations* at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf>.

Season open: Sept. 16 - Dec. 31 (northern zone); Sept. 16 – Jan. 31 (western zone); Oct. 14 – Dec. 8 (eastern zone)

Sharp-tailed grouse

A total of 775 permits will be available for the fall 2006 sharp-tailed grouse hunting season which runs from Oct. 14 through Nov. 5. A total of four units will share the available permits. For management purposes, sharp-tailed grouse management units use the same boundaries and designations as deer management units (DMU). Those units with sharp-tail permits available for fall 2006 are: DMU 2 (540 permits), DMU 8 (50 permits), DMU 9 (160 permits), and DMU 10 (25 permits).

The sharp-tailed grouse is native to Wisconsin’s barrens and savannas. Dancing-ground surveys indicate that populations of sharp-tails were low this spring. Last fall, 526 applicants applied for 780 permits. Hunters harvested 31 birds during the 2005 season. Because sharp-tailed grouse numbers are low, birds will be more difficult to find. Wildlife biologists emphasize that the opportunity to find sharp-tailed grouse is limited and difficult. Hunters are encouraged to hunt for the experience and not for the opportunity to harvest a bird.

Information on hunting sharp-tailed grouse is available on the DNR Internet site <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/hunt/grouse/stgindex.htm>.

Season open: Oct. 14 – Nov. 5

Bobwhite quail

Bobwhite quail populations have been declining across North America for the past 20 years. These declines have been even more dramatic in states like Wisconsin that are on the northern edge of the bird’s range. However, there are still good to excellent local quail hunting opportunities on both public and private lands, especially in west-central and south-central regions of the state. Green, Iowa, Lafayette and Rock counties have some of the best quail hunting opportunities.

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Habitat programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and the Upland Buffers for Wildlife Program have been extremely beneficial for upland game birds like bobwhite quail and should continue to provide good local hunting opportunities. Weather conditions in the southern part of the state should have provided for ideal nesting and brood rearing conditions.

For more information on quail hunting seasons link to the 2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf>.

Daily bag limit is five birds and the possession limit is 10.

Season open: Oct. 14 (noon opener) – Dec. 6

Cottontail rabbit

Cottontail rabbits are a very popular small game animal and typically provide for great recreational opportunities across the state. Rabbits are extremely prolific and their annual production is usually dependent upon local weather conditions during the breeding seasons. Portions of the state with adequate rainfall resulting in plenty of green, succulent vegetation should provide good rabbit production and good hunting opportunities this fall. Areas of the state experiencing drought conditions in 2006 likely will see lower than normal rabbit production and fair to good hunting opportunities.

For more information on rabbit hunting seasons link to the 2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf>.

The daily bag limit is three and the possession limit is six in both zones.

Season open: Sept. 16 – Feb. 28 (north zone); Oct. 14 (noon opener) – Feb. 28 (south zone)

Squirrels – gray and fox

Squirrels are a very popular game species and can provide some great early season hunting opportunities especially for beginning hunters. Squirrel production and resulting hunting opportunities are strongly tied to the previous year's mast or nut production. While the DNR does not have a formal mast production survey, local biologists have reported mixed mast production reports across the state over the last several years. Drought conditions seem to be one of the biggest factors impacting both hard and soft mast production at the local level. The mast crop in the northern region of the state seems to be the most impacted by drought conditions resulting in poor mast crops. However, parts of Northeast, Central and Southern Wisconsin have shown good to excellent mast crops where rainfall has been plentiful.

For more information on the fall squirrel hunting seasons, check the 2006 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/regs/SGHunt06.pdf>.

Daily bag limit is five squirrels and possession limit is 10.

Season open: Sept. 16 – Jan. 31. (Gray and fox squirrel)

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Outlook bright for 2006 waterfowl season

Contact: Kent Van Horn, DNR waterfowl ecologist - (608) 266-8841

Waterfowl hunters will enjoy a full 60-day Wisconsin duck hunting season, the longest allowed under federal guidelines. The state Natural Resources Board approved a 2006 Wisconsin waterfowl season structure that also includes expanded opening day shooting hours beginning at 9 a.m. instead of noon as in previous years

“Wisconsin waterfowlers should have a good hunting season provided there is adequate water in the wetlands and the right fall weather,” said Kent Van Horn, Department of Natural Resources migratory game bird ecologist. “The Canada goose population in Wisconsin and the Ontario population that migrates to Wisconsin in the fall look very good this year.”

There are two different populations of Canada geese that are present in Wisconsin during the regular fall hunting season: resident giant Canada geese that nest in Wisconsin and a second population of slightly smaller birds nests in along the coast of Hudson Bay in Ontario and then migrates through Wisconsin and other Midwestern states.

The 2006 breeding population estimate for giant Canada geese nesting in Wisconsin is 134,683, which is up 9 percent from 2005 and 83 percent above the long-term (20-year) mean. This is generally consistent with a growing population of Canada geese nesting in Wisconsin.

The migratory population of Ontario nesting birds is called the Mississippi Valley Population (MVP). Results from the most current banding data indicate that about 45 percent of Wisconsin’s regular goose season harvest comes from the MVP.

Information on Ontario breeding Canada geese in 2006 suggests a second very good breeding year in a row following one of the poorest breeding years on record during 2004, Van Horn says.

The breeding survey of MVP Canada geese estimated 384,353 breeding adults, which is the highest level since 1999 and 6 percent above the 1989-2006 average. The harvest of MVP geese is shared by several other states and provinces so harvest quotas are set to protect the breeding population and distribute harvest among several states.

The outlook is also good for ducks. The four most abundant ducks in Wisconsin’s fall hunting harvest are mallards, wood ducks, green-winged teal and blue-winged teal. Van Horn notes that many of the ducks harvested in Wisconsin come from birds that breed in Wisconsin.

In Wisconsin, spring precipitation was above average from March through May for most of the state. Heavy rains during the survey period and shortly after the survey should have improved brood habitat in many areas.

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The total state breeding duck population estimate of 522,571 is down 28 percent from 2005 but 22 percent above the long-term mean. Van Horn said the 2005 total state breeding duck population estimate was biased high because it included a high proportion of blue-winged teal in migration. When evaluating the 2006 breeding duck numbers with the average of the most recent 10 years (565,585 ducks), this year is looking average for breeding duck numbers in Wisconsin.

“The board heard, and the department understands, that we have a diversity of waterfowl hunters and hunting conditions across Wisconsin. The season is designed to accommodate that range of interests and should provide opportunity and enjoyment for all of Wisconsin’s waterfowlers.”

Each year, state, provincial and federal biologists from the United States and Canada cooperatively review spring breeding surveys across North America and other biological and social data. State biologists provide season recommendations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which in turn establishes a season frame work, or sideboards, within which states can establish their waterfowl hunting seasons. Wisconsin wildlife managers conducted a series of hearings around the state in early August to gather hunter comments on the season proposal approved by the Natural Resources Board today.

2006 Wisconsin Waterfowl Seasons

Early September Canada goose season: Dates: Sept. 1-15. **Bag:** Daily bag of five geese. **Other:** Hunters must purchase a \$3 early season permit.

Youth Waterfowl Hunt: Dates: Sept. 16-17. **Bag:** Regular season bag limits apply.

Ducks

Dates:

- Northern Zone: Sept. 23 – Nov. 21;
- Southern Zone: Sept. 30 – Oct. 6, Oct. 14- Dec. 5.

Bag: Daily bag of six ducks, not to include more than four mallards of which only one may be a hen, two wood ducks, one black duck, two redheads, two scaup, one pintail , one canvasback. In addition, five mergansers to include not more than two hooded mergansers. Coot daily bag increases from 10 to 15

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Canada Geese

Dates:

- Exterior Zone Sept. 16 – Dec. 16
- Mississippi River Subzone Sept. 30 – Oct. 6 and Oct. 14 – Dec. 15.

Bag: Daily Bag of two.

Horicon Zone:

Dates: Four time periods from Sept. 16-Dec. 16.

Bag: Daily bag of two, up to six tags per hunter.

Collins Zone

Dates: Three time periods from Sept 16-Nov 17.

Bag: Daily bag of two, up to six tags per hunter

Light geese, brant - Light geese (Snow, Blue and Ross)

Dates: Seasons are the same as for the Canada goose zones and subzones.

Bag: Daily Bag Limit, One brant and 10 light geese

White-fronted geese

Dates: Sept. 22 –Dec. 16.

Bag: Daily bag Limit, One white-fronted goose.

Other Important Changes for 2006 include:

- Canvasback season increases from 30 days to 60 days due to population increase
- Canada Goose statewide harvest quota is 131,100 up from 62,500 in 2005.
- Federal frameworks increased the daily bag on hooded mergansers from one to two.
- Increase in the daily coot bag from 10 to 15.
- Opening day shooting hours begin at 9a.m. instead of noon.
- The North/South duck zone line changes such that the boundary extends east from the Minnesota State line along U.S. Highway 10 to U.S. Highway 41, north on U.S. Highway 41 to the Michigan State line.
- The special goose hunting zone (the IMZ) adjacent to the Horicon NWR is eliminated and the general Horicon Zone rules now apply in this area

Additional season information and maps showing zones and tables with daily legal shooting hour times are available on the Department of Natural Resources Web site at <dnr.wi.gov> or contact a local DNR Service Center or wildlife biologist.

2006 Fall Furbearer Forecast

By John Olson, DNR furbearer specialist

Wisconsin is blessed with a wonderful diversity of common and unique members of this interesting group of wildlife. Beaver, coyote, raccoon, and muskrat are good examples of the more abundant and common species across our large state.

In contrast, the more secretive bobcat, fisher and otter are doing well in the north and slowly expanding southward. And then there's the marten, still an endangered species and barely holding its own in two small regions of the north.

This time of year many folks begin to ask in anticipation, "How are things going out there," or, "What can I expect to see this fall?" From bear hunters, to berry pickers, trekkers to trappers, folks are interested in what they can expect this fall and winter.

In a nutshell, furbearer populations are doing well, and, in some areas, a real challenge due to high numbers.

Raccoon

Raccoons are found in a wide variety of both rural and urban habitats. Areas close to a wetland or farmland mosaic have the highest populations, and even the northern forests are now home to raccoons.

"We have large populations of raccoons with the highest densities in the southern one-half of the state," reports John Olson, DNR furbearer specialist. "Raccoons are still very abundant in all counties in a wide variety of habitats, often to nuisance levels."

Tom Bahti, regional wildlife supervisor from Green Bay reports high numbers of raccoon throughout the DNR Northeast Region with "dead raccoons littering the highways and byways in recent weeks." While, on the western front, Kris Johansen, wildlife biologist for Buffalo and Trempealeau counties reports, "The raccoon population is doing extremely well, with a number of farmers complaining about their numbers and the damage they're doing to crops." Johansen sees this as a "great opportunity for young trappers and veteran trappers to gain permission for trapping on new lands and to help landowners control the swelling population."

Julie Langenberg, department wildlife veterinarian, notes however that, "High populations of raccoons are sometimes associated with localized outbreaks of Canine Distemper Virus infection, and we continue to see Canine Distemper Virus causing raccoon deaths statewide."

"People should take special care with behaviorally abnormal raccoons," Langenberg said. The signs of brain disease seen with Canine Distemper Virus can also be seen with rabies virus infection. Rabies is a fatal viral disease for humans and other warm blooded mammals. However, raccoon rabies is extremely rare in Wisconsin; it only occurs when there is "spillover" infection from skunks and bats, the more common carriers of rabies in this state. If someone sees a raccoon acting strange, they should contact a local DNR office or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in their region.

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Wildlife managers from around the state suggest that 2006 will be a good year to train a young dog or ask permission to trap on new lands. Raccoon is a species where landowner permission to hunt or trap is normally not a problem. But, ask for permission now. Don't wait until the week prior to the season opener.

Mike Zeckmeister, northern region wildlife supervisor from Antigo, urges trappers and hunters to "get permission from the landowner well in advance. It's never too early to start asking permission."

With the exception of the Mississippi River Zone, where the season opens with the muskrat and mink season, the raccoon season opens statewide for residents on Oct. 14.

Raccoon Season:

- **Hunting & Trapping by Wisconsin Residents:**

- Oct. 14 – Jan. 31, 2007

Except: Mississippi River zone, which opens day after duck season closes or the second Monday in November which ever occurs first through Jan 31, 2007.

- **Hunting by Non-residents:**

- Nov. 4 – Jan. 31, 2007 (Currently there is no raccoon trapping season for non-residents)

Except: Mississippi River zone, which opens day after duck season closes or the second Monday in November which ever occurs first through Jan 31, 2007.

Bag Limit: None

Beaver

With excellent fur prices at international auctions, where, in May, the average Wisconsin beaver pelt sold for just over \$29, interest in this furbearer remains stable and is expected to continue. Longer seasons, initiated in the 1980s, have helped to reduce beaver populations as planned, especially in northeastern Wisconsin.

Statewide the beaver population estimate is around 87,000 animals. However, local numbers vary dramatically depending on the area of the state. Also, the beaver population has not shown any signs of ill health from density-dependent wetland diseases such as botulism or tularemia, but can be affected directly by drought.

Regionally, beaver numbers appear to be stable in southeastern Wisconsin, decreasing in west-central and southwestern portions of the state, and remaining at good levels in the northern one-third of the state. Michele Woodford, of DNR's wildlife research section in Rhinelander, coordinates intensive aerial surveys every three to four years in northern beaver management zones. Following fall surveys from 2005, Woodford suggests: "We have a population of approximately 40,800 beavers in northwestern Wisconsin, known as Zone A, and around 29,000 beavers in northeastern Wisconsin, known as Zone B. Once at similar levels, the need to manage cold water streams for other values, such as trout habitat, has resulted in a gradual reduction in beavers in Zone B."

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Mike Foy, wildlife biologist for Dane and Iowa counties, reports: “Beavers are everywhere you’d expect them to be, with regular calls from farmers and highway officials about problems.” However, in central and western portions of the state, wildlife biologists report a marked decrease in beaver. Dick Thiel, wildlife naturalist at Sandhill Wildlife Area, reports, “Last winter our beaver count at Sandhill dropped to a 20-year record low population.” Tom Meier, manager of the Mead Wildlife Area in Marathon County, also reports “beaver are down considerably over the past few years.” According to Pat Beringer, wildlife biologist for Price County, “Beaver populations remain stable, with high numbers still found in remote areas where accessibility is limited.” He also suggests that, “...gas prices may be a key factor impacting the 2006-07 harvest.”

In Zone B, where more intensive management programs exist, the population has declined and is now at a level where damage to trout streams and town roads are manageable. Because beaver populations are now at acceptable levels, the trapping season in Wisconsin opens in early November, rather than mid-October, and Zone C closes the end of March rather than the end of April.

Season: Zone A (Northwest) Nov. 4 – April 30, 2007

Zone B (Northeast) Nov. 4 – April 30, 2007

Zone C (South) Nov. 4 – March 31, 2007

Zone D (Mississippi River) Day after duck season closes to March 15, 2007

Bag limit: None

Otter

“Factors that impact beaver populations have similar effects on otter,” according to John Olson, DNR furbearer ecologist. “Beaver are herbivores that prefer the inner bark of aspen, willow and cottonwood for food and their branches for construction of dams and lodges. The otter prefers other animals for food, mainly small fish, crayfish and amphibians.”

Currently, statewide otter populations are at or slightly below management goals of approximately 13,000 animals. Although a majority of the population is found in the north, otter numbers in central and southern Wisconsin appear to be increasing. They are now present in many of our major river systems of the southwest, namely the Kickapoo, Black, Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers and their tributaries.

Otter, like many of our furbearers, are associated with and depend on clean rivers, lakes and streams. Dave Matheys, wildlife biologist for Vernon and Crawford counties, says, “People interested in otters should thank all those who have worked so hard to improve the water resources of southwestern Wisconsin: farmers, landowners, DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Land and Water Conservation Districts and Trout Unlimited to name a few.” Matheys has observed high-quality riparian habitats supporting abundant otter numbers.

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“The otter harvest is highly regulated at a time when recent fur prices have sky-rocketed with an average of over \$100 per pelt,” says Todd Naas, wildlife biologist for Ashland County. Permits are issued based on estimated fall populations and expected success rates. Success rates have climbed to almost three times what they were ten years earlier.

The statewide opening date is the same as beaver, Nov. 4, and continues until March 31, 2007 in the Central and South Zones, and until April 30, 2007 in the North Zone. Anyone interested in trapping otter must have applied for a permit by Aug. 1, 2006.

“The harvest quota will actually increase slightly, but actual permit levels will decrease slightly due to increased success rates,” says Olson. “However, many applicants will receive at least one permit, depending upon the number of applicants in your zone of choice.”

Otters must be tagged at the point of harvest and registered with the DNR. In addition, although trappers may keep otter pelts, otter carcasses must be submitted to the DNR.

Season: North zone Nov. 4 – April 30, 2007

Central zone Nov. 4 – March 31, 2007

South zone Nov. 4 – March 31, 2007

Bag Limit: One per permit.

Application Deadline: Aug. 1.

Fisher

Strong interest in fisher, by tribal and state trappers, has resulted in more applicants than permits, especially in Fisher Management Zone A in northwestern Wisconsin. Permit numbers are up slightly this year, but the number of permit applications received for each zone will determine whether a trapper receives a permit in their zone of choice or is awarded a preference point.

There are six fisher management zones in Wisconsin. Zones A through D have the highest fisher populations and are located in the northern portion of the state. Zone E is in west-central Wisconsin and has a growing population. In Zone E, the best opportunities will be in the northern portions, namely Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire and Marathon counties, according to John Dunn, wildlife biologist at Eau Claire.

Zone F includes the remainder of the state and will be open for harvest in 2006 for the third year in a row. In this zone good opportunities exist on the eastern portion, in southern Shawano and Oconto counties and southeastern Marathon.

Trappers should be sure to have landowner permission prior to applying for any permits.

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However, even some areas populated with fishers for more than four decades are experiencing localized declines while adjacent areas have strong numbers. As Pat Beringer, wildlife biologist for Price County suggests, “Fisher numbers remain spotty in Price and southern Ashland and Iron counties. Although localized areas may still have lots of fisher, many trappers reported low numbers of fisher during last years trapping season.”

Yet in other areas local wildlife managers are reporting an increase in fisher presence. Jess Carstens, wildlife biologist of Dunn and Pepin counties, says, “I’m also hearing more and more about fishers, especially in Dunn County.”

All fisher must be tagged at the point of harvest and registered with the DNR. In addition, trappers may keep fisher pelts, but carcasses from fishers harvested from Fisher Zones E and F are required by the DNR.

Season: Oct. 14 – Dec. 31 for all zones

Bag Limit: One per permit

Application Deadline: Aug. 1

Bobcat

Bobcat populations have increased across the north. “Even though we’re on the northern edge of bobcat range, we do have relatively good habitat and mild winters compared to regions north of Lake Superior,” says John Olson, DNR furbearer ecologist.

Conservative management efforts have allowed for this steady increase to an estimated population of approximately 3,000 bobcats, with an average annual harvest of around 250 animals. Final permit numbers are determined in late summer when success rates and quotas are calculated. A preference system allows the continuous applicant a bobcat tag about every four to five years.

Wildlife biologists and wardens in northern, and even central, portions of the state report an increase in bobcat sightings.

As with fisher and otter, bobcat must be tagged at the point of harvest and registered with the department. Hunters and trappers keep the pelt, but bobcat carcasses, and in some years otter and fisher carcasses, are collected from the trapper or hunter.

“Registration and carcass collections allow biologists to gather important management information such as harvest pressure, overall age structure of the population, reproductive age, and previous litter sizes,” according to Bruce Bacon, wildlife biologist from Mercer and an active member of the department’s furbearer committee. In 2006, carcasses will be required from all bobcat and otter, in addition to fisher carcasses from Fisher Zones E and F.

Season: Oct. 14 – Dec. 31, 2006. North of highway 64 only.

Bag Limit: One per permit.

Application Deadline: Aug. 1.

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Coyotes, Foxes and Gray Wolves

Coyotes, the second largest of Wisconsin's native canids, have expanded their range throughout southern and western Wisconsin. In the remainder of the state they continue to do well with the greatest challenge in established eastern gray wolf territories. In these areas coyotes have learned to be less vocal and avoid their larger cousin. An adaptable animal, coyotes seem to fare well almost anywhere, even in urban and suburban settings.

Wildlife managers across much of Wisconsin are reporting a marked increase in coyotes. The same is being observed for both gray and red fox, with "reds" closer to human dwellings and grays in the brush land and woods. Jim Tomasko, wildlife technician from Waushara County, reports a high population of cottontail rabbits and, of course, coyotes.

A new tool, called the cable restraint, is now available for use during the latter portion of the existing coyote and fox season, namely from Jan. 1 to Feb. 15, 2007. According to Steve Hoffman, wildlife biologist from Waupaca, "...this tool was thoroughly tested during three years of science-based research, and was remarkable in its ability to restrain, without injury, any wild or domestic canine." After three years of use by licensed trappers things are going well, with further studies on the horizon. For further information request DNR Publication WM-443-2004, [Cable Restraints in Wisconsin, A Guide to Responsible Use.](#)

"Foxes, the smallest of our three native canids, prefer a more rural setting," says area wildlife supervisor Tami Ryan from Waukesha, who also reports that, "coyote numbers are stable and steadily increasing in the southeast portion of the state, where they've been known to cause quite a stir around Germantown, Mequon and Port Washington."

Red fox numbers have increased across many areas of the north, but mange and coyote competition are impacting populations in western and southern portions of the state. A density dependent disease, sarcoptic mange was observed across Wisconsin in susceptible canid species including red fox, coyote and gray wolf in 2003. Gray fox have fewer cases of mange and appear to be doing well in southern and central Wisconsin.

In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service down listed the eastern gray wolf in Wisconsin from endangered to threatened status, yet a court challenge in early 2005 re-listed them as a federally endangered species. Adrian Wydeven, mammalian ecologist for the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources adds that, "Two years ago Wisconsin delisted gray wolves from the state list and federal authorities have proposed a similar action at the federal level. The federal proposal continues to move forward and when completed will be a major step forward in state management of this species in the western Great Lakes region."

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Currently, an August 9, 2006 court order issued by Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., has caused the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and its partner USDA-Wildlife Services to suspend all trapping and lethal control of depredating gray wolves.

The gradual increase in numbers and expansion of the gray wolf across northern and west-central portions of the state offer a unique opportunity for hunters and trappers to observe these wild and wonderful canines.

“We encourage the public to report their observations,” says Wydeven, “especially hunters and trappers who are intimately familiar with their area of the state. This kind of information is valuable to our efforts in monitoring populations.” Every observation counts and we welcome the help.

Trapping Season: Coyote and all fox species:

Northern Zone: Oct. 14 – Feb. 15 (North of US Highway 64)

Southern Zone: Oct. 28 – Feb. 15 (South of Highway 64)

Hunting Season of Coyote:

Year round with seasonal closure during gun deer season in some areas

Hunting Season of Fox:

Oct. 14- Feb. 15 (North of Highway 64)

Oct. 28 – Feb. 15 (South of Highway 64)

Bag Limit: None

Muskrat and Mink

Mink and muskrat populations appear to be doing relatively well in most of the state, with pockets of good numbers, and pockets of poor numbers. As observed by Conservation Warden John Christian, “Fresh water inland marshes and riverine systems are again noticeably lacking recruitment in muskrat and mink.”

On a statewide basis, opportunities to trap these species are quite good, as they exist in most areas where permanent water can be found. Mark Andersen, wildlife biologist for the Mississippi River, suggests that muskrat populations on the Big River “appear to be fair.” He further reminds trappers that, “...on the Mississippi you need to have a USFWS trapping permit and tags, as well as the Wisconsin license in order to trap.”

However, the recent drought in large portions of northern Wisconsin can affect all aquatic and semi-aquatic life. “Due to severe drought conditions this summer, water levels in many ponds and waterways are very low to dry”, explains Todd Naas, wildlife biologist for Ashland County. He further states, “Trappers targeting these animals should focus on larger waterways with more permanent and stable water sources.”

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The season opener for muskrat is Oct. 14 in the North Zone, Oct. 28 in the South and Winnebago Zones and the day after the duck season closes, or the second Monday in November whichever occurs first, in the Mississippi River Zone. For mink the season is now identical to muskrat, opening and closing on the same respective dates, depending on the zone.

Season: Muskrat & Mink:

North zone, Oct. 14 – Feb. 28, 2007

South zones Oct.28 – Feb. 28, 2007

Winnebago zone Oct. 28 – March 15, 2007

Mississippi River – begins the day after duck season closes or the second Monday in November, whichever occurs first – Feb. 28, 2007

Bag Limit: None.

Additional Responsibilities

Local ordinances

Some villages, cities and towns throughout the state, primarily in urban areas, require special permits and/or have ordinances that restrict trapping or the discharge of firearms or bows. Check with local town or village offices before you hunt or trap to see if special rules apply. A quality hunting or trapping experience can be found on public or private lands, but pre-season scouting and permission from landowners is critical.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Trapping

In a progressive effort to improve the science of furbearer management, the State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Trappers Association, Wisconsin Conservation Congress and individual trappers have been actively involved in an international effort to develop BMPs for Trapping. This is one of the largest collective trap research efforts ever undertaken anywhere in the world, with the final product being information and suggestions that each state and their trappers can use to improve on animal welfare, trapping in general and, specifically, trapper education.

“Advances in trapping through scientific study are the future of resource management in Wisconsin and in the United States, where our natural resources belong to all citizens,” says Tom Hauge, director of the DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management. “Regulated harvests combined with science-based knowledge, a caring public and highly trained conservation officers will provide us with reasonable tools with which we can continue to manage wildlife populations while enjoying the immense pleasure and knowledge of having intact, natural systems,” concludes Hauge.

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Trapper Education

According to Virgil Schroeder, president of the Wisconsin Trappers Association, “If you would like to learn more about furbearers, trapping history, responsibilities and ethics of the modern-day trapper, consider taking the trapper education course offered by the department and taught by dedicated volunteer instructors of the Wisconsin Trappers Association.”

If you are interested in becoming a trapper, completion of the 12-hour, \$8.00 course is mandatory for most individuals. Wisconsin residents who had purchased a trapping license prior to 1992 or who are actively engaged in farming are exempt from the trapper education requirement.

To locate a current class near you, contact your local DNR office or check the [Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program Course Web-site](#).

Beginning this year, as a result of legislation passed in April of 2006, Wisconsin will allow trapping by non-residents from those states that allow Wisconsin residents to trap in their state. See the 2006 Wisconsin Trapping Regulations pamphlet for further information on which states are not currently part of this reciprocal agreement. All nonresidents must first take a Wisconsin Trapper Education Course before they may purchase a Wisconsin Trapping License.

For more information please contact John Olson, Furbearer Specialist, (715) 685-2934.

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Hunting doves has unique safety concerns

MADISON -- The opening of Wisconsin's third mourning dove season (Sept. 1 - Oct. 30) is just around the corner. The smallish, fast-flying bird is especially common in the southern two-thirds of the state. In fact, biologists estimate that some 4 to 5 million mourning doves migrate through Wisconsin each fall.

"In many other states the mourning dove hunt signals the start of the fall hunting season," said Tim Lawhern, hunter education administrator with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "For many, it's a social gathering and an opportunity to introduce new hunters to the sport."

"Because of the unique ways to hunt doves and because of the bird itself, there are some specific safety techniques that all mourning dove hunters should employ," Lawhern said.

- Carefully check your shells before you enter the field. Use only those designed for dove hunting. Make sure your gun is plugged to hold no more than three shells.
- Do not load your gun until you've reached your hunting location on the field. Unload your gun before you leave.
- Know the location of other hunters - if any - on the field and make sure they are aware of your location.
- Identify your safe zone of fire and never shoot outside this zone. Your safe zone of fire is the area where you can safely shoot while taking into consideration the location of other hunters, roads and field boundaries.
- Do not shoot at low-flying birds. Always shoot skyward.
- Wear safety glasses or goggles and a cap with a bill to help protect your eyes from falling shot.
- When retrieving downed birds, visually mark the location before you leave your shooting location. Be sure other hunters in the area are aware that you are entering the field.
- Do not attempt to shoot at doves while retrieving a downed bird or when you are away from your shooting location.
- Do not hunt doves outside of the boundaries of the dove field.
- Never shoot a roosting or perching bird. Mourning doves often roost or perch on electrical, telephone, fiber optic or other energy or communication transmission lines. You could be criminally charged for damaging a line in this manner and held responsible for its repair, often costing tens of thousands of dollars.

Lawhern says in addition to these safety tips the basic rules of firearm safety - which are summarized by the initials TAB-K - also apply to dove hunting, or any other species.

(more)

In the TAB-K formula for firearm safety, “T” means treat every firearm as if it’s loaded. “A” means always keep your firearm pointed in a safe direction. “B” means to be certain of your target and what lies beyond, and “K” means keep your finger out of the trigger guard until you are ready to fire.

According to Lawhern, the mourning dove season is a great opportunity to introduce a new or young hunter to the sport.

“With the dove season starting at a time of the year when warm weather is common, it’s a good chance to introduce a new hunter - young or old - to the sport. Not having to deal with the harsher fall and winter weather of other seasons can make for a much more enjoyable experience.”

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Firearm safety should be part of hunting plans

MADISON - As hunters begin preparations to stalk their favorite game during the upcoming fall hunting seasons, Wisconsin safety experts remind them to review firearm safety as part of those initial plans.

Last year, Wisconsin recorded a total of 33 hunting-related firearm injuries with four fatalities. Overall, hunting is getting safer due in large part to mandatory hunter education for those born on or after Jan. 1, 1973 but any injury or death is one too many. Many adults are also taking a hunter education class as safety certification is required to hunt game in some popular western states.

“We hope the day will come when we’ll report that there have been no firearm injuries during any hunting season in Wisconsin,” Lawhern said. “But that day will only come when every hunter makes it his or her personal responsibility to practice firearm safety 100 percent of the time.

“All hunters should do their part to create a new tradition in Wisconsin by making our hunting seasons free of firearm injuries,” Lawhern concluded.

Essential to any responsible hunting trip is an ironclad adherence to the four basic rules of firearm safety that can be easily recalled by remembering the TAB-K formula.

“Wardens investigate very few, if any, true accidents during any of our hunting seasons,” said Tim Lawhern, hunter education administrator with the Department of Natural Resources. “Most of the time, when someone is involved in a shooting incident, the shooter has failed to follow one of the most basic rules of firearm safety covered by TAB-K.”

(more)

What is TAB-K?

T - Treat every firearm as if it's loaded.

A - Always point your firearm in a safe direction.

B - Be certain of your target and what lies beyond.

K - Keep your finger out of the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.

"While a hunter may certainly not have intended to harm another person with his or her firearm, the fact remains that most hunting-related firearm injuries result from a violation of one or more of these simple rules," Lawhern said. "It's not an accident when someone disregards safety, it's negligence."

Planning your fall hunting trip also means having your gear in proper working order. Firearms should be cleaned and closely inspected for any signs of mechanical wear that could result in a problem in the field.

But firearms aren't the only items to be checked well in advance of a hunting trip. The clothing that you'll wear and other equipment should also be inspected for signs of wear and tear.

"Anything that might lead you to compromise safety should be repaired, discarded or replaced," said Lawhern. "A jacket that doesn't fit right, faded blaze orange clothing, or a scope that isn't adjusted correctly could distract you when you ought to be concentrating on safety."

Game Specific Safety

While the "TAB-K" safety rules can be applied to any hunting situation, there are other general precautions to take when hunting Wisconsin's various types of game this fall.

Turkey

- Don't stalk a turkey. Stalking a calling turkey usually means you're stalking another hunter.
- Be aware of other hunters. Overlapping seasons in the fall mean you're likely to have company. If you're wearing camouflage, let others know of your whereabouts by shouting out to them.

Waterfowl

- If hunting from a boat or canoe, follow rules of safe boating. Wear lifejackets.
- Wear blaze orange to and from your boat or blind.
- If hunting with a dog, keep your dog's safety in mind, too.
- Unload your gun before setting it down. A few incidents happen when the dog steps on the trigger, firing the gun.

Small Game (pheasant, upland birds, squirrel, rabbit, fox, raccoon, etc.)

- When hunting birds, know your safe zone of fire at all times. Know where your partners are and where you can safely shoot.
- Be aware that others might be hunting in a nearby field. Look for signs of other hunters such as vehicles in the parking lot or flashes of blaze orange.
- Squirrel hunting is often best in the morning. Carry a flashlight to help walk through woods without stumbling.
- Only shoot at squirrels that have a safe backstop. If you can see daylight behind the squirrel, think of where your shot could go if you miss your target. If you're shooting a .22 rifle, that bullet could travel a mile or so.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Tim Lawhern (608) 266-1317

Ethical hunters are ‘Eyes and Ears’ of DNR wardens for catching poachers

MADISON -- Wisconsin's conservation wardens take pride in knowing where to be and when to catch poachers and others who break state environmental and conservation laws. And while there are those who say, "They can't be everywhere," there are plenty of ethical hunters and outdoor enthusiasts who are ready to lend a hand -- and a phone -- when violators are spotted.

Wisconsin's ethical hunters are a strong ally in assuring fair chase and protection of the game we all enjoy.

Thanks to those well-meaning folks and a small but dedicated group of telephone hotline operators and investigators, there isn't much in the way of environmental or conservation crime that escapes the scrutiny of a Wisconsin warden.

"The conscientious hunter, angler or outdoor enthusiast is our best 'undercover' agent," said Marilyn Jahnke, a team leader in the special operations section of the bureau of law enforcement. "And we hope that ethical hunters and others will continue lending their eyes and ears to us when hunting seasons get underway this fall."

The toll-free Turn in Poachers or TIP line number is 1-800-TIP-WDNR or 1-800-847-9367. Subscribers to U.S. Cellular service plans can access the hotline free of charge by dialing #367. All calls to the hotline are confidential and the caller can remain anonymous if he or she chooses so.

"About half of the calls that we've had the last few years are from people calling on cellular phones," Jahnke said. "Those are some of our most useful calls because the person is often witnessing a violation in progress. They can provide very specific information to the operator and it makes for an easier case to close."

Information can also be shared with the special investigation operators through E-mail at [<lawenf@dnr.state.wi.us>](mailto:lawenf@dnr.state.wi.us).

The DNR poacher tip line has been in operation since 1982 and its operators have answered more than 40,000 calls during that time. During the last year operators handled about 5,000 calls, forwarding just under half of them to conservation wardens for additional follow-up.

Jahnke says that when reporting a violation; try to note as many facts as possible. You will be asked a variety of questions and the more information you can provide, the quicker the violator can be caught and the case successfully brought to completion.

"We're extremely grateful for all the tips and leads that have been reported to our hotline during the last 20 years," Jahnke added.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: DNR Law Enforcement Special Operations Team - (608) 267-2774

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West Nile Virus in Birds

The latest information from United States Department of Agriculture-Animal and Planet Health Inspection Services-Wildlife Services reports 74 West Nile virus-positive birds out of 151 tested. The following counties have had at least two positive birds and are therefore closed to any additional testing (counties in all capitals letters are new additions since the last update): **Ashland, BARRON, BROWN, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Door, Douglas, Eau Claire, FOND DU LAC, GRANT, IRON, Jackson, KENOSHA, La Crosse, Outagamie, OZAUKEE, ROCK, Saint Croix, SAUK, Waukesha, WAUSHARA, Winnebago, and Wood.** Dead bird reports are still welcome for all counties at the dead bird hotline (1-800-433-1610).

Although very few mosquitoes are infected with West Nile virus, the best protection against the disease is to reduce the risk of mosquito bites. To minimize your exposure to mosquitoes, you can take some personal protective measures as well as making some changes around your home to reduce mosquito breeding habitat.

Some tips to protect yourself from West Nile virus include:

- Use effective mosquito repellent and apply according to the label instructions. For more information see the [Centers for Disease Control West Nile Virus prevention site](#).
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes.
- Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with a repellent containing permethrin or DEET will give extra protection. These repellents are the most effective and most studied.
- Avoid being outside during times of high mosquito activity, specifically around dawn and dusk.
- Keep window screens repaired so that mosquitoes cannot enter your home.
- Dispose of discarded tires, cans, or plastic containers left outside that may contain standing water.
- Drain standing water from pool or hot tub covers.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheel barrows when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths, pet dishes and wading pools every three to four days.
- Keep drains, ditches and culverts clean of trash and weeds so water will drain properly.
- Clean gutters to ensure they drain properly.

For more information regarding West Nile virus, contact DNR wildlife biologist, Rebecca Osborn at (608) 335-2765

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Wildlife health specialists monitoring for Avian Influenza

The Wildlife Health Team of the Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Wildlife Management routinely investigates the causes of wild animal deaths performing roughly 400 to 500 animal necropsies each year. The unit also monitors wildlife populations for evidence of diseases that may threaten wildlife, livestock and human populations. This year, the team will increase surveillance and testing of waterfowl for evidence of avian influenza.

“The 400 to 500 animals we examine each year are a sample of the thousands of animal deaths reported each year,” said Julie Langenberg, veterinarian and leader of the Wildlife Health Team. “Many wildlife deaths from disease and parasites occur in cycles. There are things like trematodes (an intestinal parasite) and botulism that regularly cause large scale duck die-offs.”

New or emerging disease threats are also monitored. Responding to a heightened worldwide concern over possible spread of the highly pathogenic strain of H5N1 avian influenza (AI), the wildlife health team, working with USDA-Wildlife Services, expects to screen approximately 2000 wild birds for AI this year. In addition to sampling captured birds, the wildlife health team will be asking hunters’ cooperation in sampling hunter harvested waterfowl from some locations during the fall hunting seasons.

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a group of viruses that affect wild and domestic birds. The viruses are only found in a small number of birds in the wild, usually waterfowl and shorebirds, and rarely cause disease in these birds. The viruses are transmitted in fecal droppings, saliva, and nasal discharges.

Veterinarians and bird experts generally agree that migratory waterfowl and shorebirds could provide the first warnings that the highly pathogenic strain of the H5N1 avian influenza virus has arrived in North America and that surveillance of these populations is a reasonable precaution.

Although to date, H5N1 has not been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or humans in North America, the disease has been detected and associated with deaths in wild birds in Asia and Europe. Animal health experts in Wisconsin would not be surprised to find at least some of the less serious forms of avian influenza in wild birds in Wisconsin.

(more)

“Common sense indicates that we should be vigilant for evidence of avian influenza in wild birds,” said Langenberg. “Wisconsin has been planning to deal with AI for months, and we have strong partnerships across wildlife, agricultural and public health agencies and bird interest groups to watch for and deal with an outbreak.

Wildlife disease surveillance can also serve to protect human health. For diseases such as West Nile Virus, which is spread among wildlife and humans by a mosquito bite, monitoring and recording deaths of crows and bluejays gives researchers a good picture of where the disease is active. These birds are very susceptible to the disease and are a good early indicator that humans should take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

Additional information on Avian Influenza and West Nile Virus in Wisconsin is available on the Department of Natural Resources Internet site <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/> under Wildlife Health.

People who have direct contact with wild birds should be cautious and there are simple precautions you can take to protect you and your family from wildlife diseases:

- Observe wildlife from a distance.
- Do not pick up sick or dead wild animals without gloves. Whenever you touch an animal, wash hands immediately after the contact occurs. Wear rubber gloves when cleaning or handling wildlife, don't handle or eat sick birds, cook all game thoroughly, practice good hygiene (wash hands, don't eat or drink while handling wildlife etc)
- Call the WI Dead Bird Hotline (1-800-433-1610) to report a dead bird. For other wildlife, contact your local [DNR service center](#), the DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management at 608-266-8204, or a local licensed wildlife rehabilitator for guidance.
- Clean bird feeders and bird baths regularly, using a 10% bleach solution as a disinfectant before the final rinse. Keep fresh, dry food in a feeder and maintain the ground underneath free of discarded hulls and droppings. Change the water in a birdbath every 2-3 days.

Don't feed geese or other waterfowl at public parks. Congregations of geese in these areas not only can contribute to a variety of diseases being transmitted among the birds, but can also increase environmental fecal contamination and cause aggressive bird behavior.

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